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SUBJECT: HUMAN RIGHTS HEARINGS ON PARAGUAY
UNEDITED
FOLLOWING ARE EXCERPTS OF/TESTIMONY GIVEN JULY 27 BEFORE
FRASER SUBCOMMITTEE. COPY HAS BEEN POUCHED TO EMBASSY.

QUOTE: PROFESSOR ALEXANDER. THANK YOU. AMBASSADOR BEN
STEPHANSKI AND I WERE ASKED BY THE INTERNATIONAL LEAGUE FOR
HUMAN RIGHTS TO UNDERTAKE A MISSION TO PARAGUAY TO LOOK
INTO THE STATE OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN THAT SOUTH AMERICAN
REPUBLIC.

IN PURSUANCE OF THAT REQUEST, WE SPENT THE PERIOD FROM
JULY 6TH TO 15TH, 1976 IN PARAGUAY, PRINCIPALLY IN
ASUNCION, ALTHOUGH WE MADE ONE VISIT OUTSIDE OF THE CAPITAL.
I ALSO SUBSEQUENTLY SPENT TWO DAYS IN BUENOS AIRES,
ARGENTINA, WHERE I WAS ABLE TO TALK WITH SEVERAL OF THE
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MORE IMPORTANT POLITICAL EXILES FROM PARAGUAY, PARTICULARLY
DISSIDENTS FROM THE GOVERNMENT PARTY, THE PARTIDO COLORADO,
WHO LIVE THERE.

DURING OUR STAY IN PARAGUAY, WE HAD INTERVIEWS WITH MORE

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THAN 70 DIFFERENT PEOPLE. THESE INCLUDED CABINET MINISTERS, GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS DEALING WITH INDIAN PROBLEMS, LEADERS

OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH, HEADS OF THE OPPOSITION POLITICAL PARTIES, RELATIVES OF POLITICAL PRISONERS.

WE WERE ALSO ABLE TO TALK, UNDER RATHER LIMITING CIRCUMSTANCES, WITH THREE POLITICAL PRISONERS STILL BEING HELD WHEN WE WERE THERE. ALTHOUGH WE SOUGHT AN INTERVIEW WITH THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC, HE DID NOT SEE FIT TO GRANT ONE TO US.

IT IS ON THE BASIS OF OUR OBSERVATIONS DURING THIS RECENT TRIP THAT WE WISH TO OFFER SOME OBSERVATIONS ON THE STATUS OF HUMAN RIGHTS AND POLITICAL DEMOCRACY IN PARAGUAY.

THE REPRESSION WAVE PRESENTLY BY THE STROESSNER REGIME BEGAN AT THE END OF 1974. AT THAT TIME THE GOVERNMENT ALLEGED THAT IT HAD DISCOVERED A PLOT TO KILL PRESIDENT STROESSNER. SOMETHING LIKE 200 PEOPLE WERE ARRESTED AT THAT TIME.

DURING MOST OF 1975 THE PERSECUTION RELAXED, BUT IN DECEMBER 1975 A LARGE NUMBER OF PEOPLE ALLEGED TO HAVE BEEN MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY WERE ARRESTED.

FINALLY, IN MARCH-APRIL-MAY OF THIS YEAR, THE SUPPOSED DISCOVERY OF A GROUP WHICH WAS ATTEMPTING TO ORGANIZE GUERRILLA ACTIVITIES, WAS THE EXCUSE OFFERED FOR AN EVEN WIDER ROUNDUP OF PARAGUAYAN CITIZENS.

IN ALL THREE PARTS OF THIS WAVE, OF REPRESSION THE PEASANTS AND OTHER RURAL FOLK HAVE BEEN PARTICULARLY IMPORTANT VICTIMS. WE HEARD ESTIMATES VARYING FROM FIVE HUNDRED TO 1500 POLITICAL PRISONERS JAILED DURING THE LAST YEAR AND A HALF.
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THE LIST OF ABOUT 200 PRISONERS WHICH WE RECEIVED WHEN WE LEFT PARAGUAY INCLUDED MAINLY PROFESSIONAL PEOPLE AND STUDENTS OF ASUNCION, BUT FEW PEASANT LEADERS, HAVE UNDOUBTEDLY BEEN THE PRINCIPAL VICTIMS OF THE LATEST WAVE OF REPRESSION.

THE PEOPLE WHO-HAVE BEEN ARRESTED IN THIS LATEST WAVE OF REPRESSION HAVE BEEN HELD WITHOUT TRIAL, A NUMBER OF THEM HAVE DISAPPEARED, SOME HAVE CERTAINLY BEEN TORTURED, AND AT LEAST SOME HAVE CERTAINLY BEEN KILLED.

THE PURPOSE OF THIS WAVE OF REPRESSION HAS BEEN CLEAR, AT LEAST TO US. IT HAS HAD AS ITS OBJECTIVE, IN THE

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FIRST PLACE, DESTROYING, OR IF POSSIBLE ABSORBING THE AUTONOMOUS ORGANIZATIONS OR INTEREST GROUPS WHICH WERE ESTABLISHED IN RECENT YEARS; AND IN THE SECOND PLACE, OF TERRORIZING THE GENERAL POPULATION, OF TELLING THE PARAGUAYAN PEOPLE THAT THEY SHOULD UNDER NO CIRCUMSTANCES TRY TO OPERATE AUTONOMOUSLY OF THE STROESSNER DICTATORSHIP.

---STEPHANSKY: OUR FIRST RECOMMENDATION IS TO BELIEVE THAT TO KEEP IN CONTINUING TOUCH WITH WHAT IS TAKING PLACE IN PARAGUAY AND TO BRING TO THE ATTENTION OF SUCH ORGANIZATIONS AS THE UNITED NATIONS AND THE ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES, CONTINUING VIOLATIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN THAT COUNTRY.

---I BELIEVE THEREHAS BEEN ONLY ONE HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION THAT HAS GONE TO PARAGUAY. THAT WAS IN CONNECT-ION A FEW YEARS AGO WITH ALLEGATIONS OF GENOCIDE AMONG INDIANS, THE ACHE-GUAYAKI INDIAN GROUPS.

---IT IS OUR FEELING, AND I REALLY MUST SAY ONLY THE PRELIMINARY REPORT, BECAUSE I UNDERSTAND THE FINAL REPORT HAS NOT BEEN MUCH CHANGED, THAT THE REPORT IS SUBSTANTIALLY A WHITEWASH, WHICH THEN MOVES TO MAKE ANOTHER RECOMMENDATION, THAT A FULL SCALE OAS HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION GO DOWN.

---WE REALIZE THAT ONE OF THE THINGS WHICH WORRIES GENERAL
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STROESSNER AND THOSE AROUND HIM IS THE INTERNATIONAL IMAGE OF THE PARAGUAYAN REGIME. WE WOULD SUGGEST THAT ONE WAY IN WHICH THAT IMAGE MIGHT BE IMPROVED SUBSTANTIALLY WITH LITTLE OR NO RISK TO HIS GOVERNMENT, I WOULD SAY NO, RATHER THAN LITTLE, WOULD BE GENERAL AMNESTY TO THOSE POLITICAL PRISONERS WHO HAVE BEEN KEPT IN JAIL FOR PERIODS UP TO AS LONG AS 18 YEARS.

---ANOTHER RECOMMENDATION WE HAVE IS THAT THE UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE SHOULD IMMEDIATELY END THE MILITARY AID PROGRAM IN PARAGUAY. IT IS DUE TO EXPIRE WITHIN A YEAR. IT IS DOWN TO A LEVEL OF DOLS 1,000,000 OR SO.

---WE RECOMMEND THE APPROPRIATE CONGRESSIONAL COMMITTEES THAT BEFORE THE PASSAGE OF THE NEXT AID APPROPRIATIONS THEY SEND AT LEAST ONE REPRESENTATIVE TO PARAGUAY TO INVESTIGATE WHETHER THAT COUNTRY QUALIFIES FOR AID UNDER THE

CONGRESSIONAL PROSCRIPTION AGAINST ITS GOING TO COUNTRIES WHICH CONSISTENTLY VIOLATE THE HUMAN RIGHTS.

---WE BELIEVE TOO THAT IT WOULD BE APPROPRIATE FOR THE

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INTER-AMERICAN PRESS ASSOCIATION TO INVESTIGATE THOROUGHLY THE STROESSNER GOVERNMENT'S PERSECUTION OF ITS OPPOSITION TO THE GOVERNMENT, NEWSPAPER CALLED EL RADICAL.

--MR. FRASER. MR. AMBASSADOR, DID YOU HAVE OCCASION TO TALK WITH EMBASSY OFFICIALS DURING YOUR VISIT TO PARAGUAY?

MR. STEPHANSKY. YES, SIR.

MR. FRASER. DID YOU DISCUSS WITH THEIR PERCEPTIONS OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN PARAGUAY?

MR. STEPHANSKY. YES, WE DID. I MIGHT SIMPLY ADD THAT DURING THE TIME WE WERE THERE, WE WERE HELPED A GREAT DEAL IN SETTING UP APPOINTMENTS BY THE EMBASSY. WE FOUND THEM ALWAYS FORTHCOMING IN ALL OF OUR DISCUSSIONS.

THERE HAD BEEN SOME WHISPERING HERE AND THERE, A
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NUMBER OF THE PEOPLE ON THE STAFF I HAD KNOWN FROM FORMER TIMES, THAT PERHAPS THE EMBASSY WAS A LITTLE TOO CLOSELY IDENTIFIED WITH THE REGIME.

I DO NOT KNOW HOW ONE MEASURES THAT. YOU HAVE TO HAVE RELATIONS OF VARIOUS KINDS CLEARLY.

---MR. FRASER. THAT WAS A VIEW EXPRESSED BY SOME EMBASSY STAFF?

MR. STEPHANSKY. THAT WAS A VIEW EXPRESSED. I FELT ONE WAY TO CHECK IT OUT WOULD BE TO TRY TO ESTABLISH WHETHER THE EMBASSY AND THE STAFF WAS HAVING REGULAR CONTACT WITH THE SMALL BUT VERY VOCAL OPPOSITE GROUPS, BOTH IN THE PARLIAMENT AND THOSE AT THE MOMENT NOT IN THE PARLIAMENT LIKE THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTY WHICH HAS NOT YET BEEN LEGALIZED.

THE FEMINISTA PARTY WHICH HAS CHOSEN NOT TO BE A PART OF THE MACHINE ALSO EXISTS. THE REPORTS WE GOT FROM EVERYONE WE DID MANAGE TO SEE ALL OF THE LEADERS, WAS WITHOUT EXCEPTION THEY WERE VERY SATISFIED WITH THE KIND OF CONTACTS THEY HAD, THE OPENNESS OF THE CONTACTS AND THE REGULARITY OF THE CONTACTS.

I FELT THAT ON BALANCE IT TENDED TO SHOW THAT THE REGIME WAS NOT MONOPOLIZING THE EMBASSY.

---MR. FRASER. WAS THE EMBASSY VIEW, I AM MORE INTERESTED IN THE OFFICIAL VIEW OF THE EMBASSY, THAT IS THE VIEW OF

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THE AMBASSADOR. WAS THE VIEW OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS SITUATION SIMILAR TO THE VIEW YOU OBTAINED THROUGH YOUR VISIT?

MR. STEPAHSNKY. I AM NOT SURE WHAT PROFESSOR ALEXANDER'S REACTION TO THAT WOULD BE. MY PERSONAL ONE IS THAT THE ANSWER IS AFFIRMATIVE. THAT IS TO SAY SPEAKING WITH THEM, THEY KNOW VERY, VERY WELL WHAT IS HAPPENING. THEY DEPLORE IT.

IN FACT, IT TOUCHES SOME OF THE FAMILIES OF PEOPLE WHO
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ARE WORKING FOR EMBASSY OFFICIALS. WE WERE TOLD OF SEVERAL CASES IN WHICH PEOPLE DISAPPEARED, DETENTION HAD TAKEN PLACE. IT CANNOT HELP BUT TOUCH THEIR LIVES. THEY ARE VERY MUCH AWARE OF IT.

WHAT I CANNOT ANSWER IS THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE EMBASSY OVER TIME HAS MADE REPRESENTATIONS TO THE GOVERNMENT. I THINK THEY HAVE FREQUENT, HOW ENERGETIC, I AM NOT CERTAIN. ON BALANCE I AM REALLY RATHER SATISFIED WITH MY OWN EVALUATION OF AN EMBASSY IN A VERY DIFFICULT SITUATION, THAT IS REALLY DOING PRETTY WELL.

---MR. KOCH. THANK YOU, MR. CHAIRMAN. DO YOU THINK OUR AMBASSADOR THERE IS SENDING HONEST REPORTS BACK TO THE STATE DEPARTMENT?

MR. STEPHANSKY. FUNDAMENTALLY I DO NOT KNOW BECAUSE I HAVE NOT READ ANY REPORTS. SPEAKING FOR MYSELF, WITH RESPECT TO THE CONVERSATIONS WE HAD, HE WAS STRAIGHTFORWARD, FORTHCOMING AND KNEW VERY WELL WHAT WAS HAPPENING.

---MR. KOCH. THAT IS THE POINT I WANT TO GET TO, YOUR IMPRESSION FROM YOUR CONVERSATIONS WITH THE AMERICAN AMBASSADOR, THAT HE IS AWARE OF THE REPRESSION AND SO EXPRESSED HIMSELF TO YOU. IS THAT A FACT?

PROFESSOR ALEXANDER. WITHOUT ANY DOUBT.

MR. STEPHANSKY. WITHOUT A DOUBT.

---MR. KOCH. THEREFORE ONE OR TWO THINGS OCCUR. EITHER HE IS SENDING A HONEST REPORT, SETTING FORTH THAT, AND IT IS NOT READ OR FOLLOWED OR APPROVED HERE IN THE UNITED STATES OR HE IS SENDING A FALSE REPORT OR A REPORT OTHER THAN THAT WHICH HE DISCUSSED. IS THAT NOT A FAIR CONCLUSION, ONE OR THE OTHER?

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MR. STEPHANSKY. THERE IS A POSSIBLE THIRD ELEMENT IN THIS.

---MR. KOCH. WHAT ELSE?

MR. STEPHANSKY. THIS IS A VERY DIFFICULT PLACE. I THINK THE U.S. AMBASSADOR UNDER THE KINDS OF REQUIREMENTS THAT WE HAVE IN OUR LEGISLATION, REALLY HAS A RATHER DIFFICULT KIND OF ROLE TO PLAY.

OBVIOUSLY HE CANNOT BE IN A CONSTANT PROCESS OF CONTINUOUS DEADLY DISPUTE WITH THEM.

---MR. KOCH. LET ME MAKE A POINT. IS NOT HIS ROLE AND REQUIREMENT THAT WHATEVER REPORTS HE SENDS BE ABSOLUTELY FACTUAL SO AS TO PERMIT US TO HAVE AND CONDUCT A FOREIGN POLICY BASED ON REALITY. IF HE WANTS TO BE A NICE GUY OR BAD GUY, IS OF NO RELEVANCE IN THIS MATTER, IS THAT NOT FACTUAL?

MR. STEPHANSKY. I THINK THAT IS FACTUAL; ON THE REPORTING FRONT, I HAVE TO PLEAD IGNORANCE BECAUSE I HAVE NOT SEEN A REPORT. I CAN ONLY REPORT ABOUT OUR DIRECT CONVERSATION. I WAS ADDRESSING MYSELF TO ANOTHER FACET.

---MR. KOCH. PLEASE?

MR. STEPHANSKY. THAT IS THAT YOU ARE STRONGLY TEMPTED, AND YOU ARE, AT TIMES, ESPECIALLY IN THIS FLUCTUATING KIND OF SITUATION, WHERE VIOLATIONS ARE CONCERNED, YOU PERHAPS ALWAYS PRESERVE THE HOPE MAYBE MISTAKENLY THAT YOU CAN INDUCE THIS PLACE TO CHANGE.

I THINK THAT THERE HAS BEEN PROBABLY, AT LEAST FROM WHAT I CAN GATHER, THAT EVER PRESENT HOPE IN THE AMBASSADOR'S HEART. HE DID MENTION EARLIER THIS YEAR BEFORE THE LATEST BAD ROUNDUP THAT THERE WERE RELATIVELY SMALL NUMBERS OF LONG DETAINEES LEFT, MAYBE ABOUT 38.

PROFESSOR ALEXANDER. 35 IN THE SUMMER OF 1974.

MR. STEPHANSKY. HE HOPED THAT MAYBE THAT WOULD FINALLY BE ERASED WITH AN AMNESTY OR SOME KIND OF ACTION THAT WOULD PERMIT THESE PEOPLE TO LEAVE THE COUNTRY.

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MANY OF THEM ARE BROKEN IN HEALTH AND DO NOT EVEN WANT TO STAY THERE ANY MORE.

I THINK THAT YOU ARE PUSHING IN THIS DIRECTION, THEN I THINK YOU MAY HAVE SOMETHING OF A PROBLEM, HOW HARD YOU ARE GOING TO HIT.

---MR. KOCH. I DO NOT THINK THAT IS REALLY RESPONSIVE TO MY NEED WHEN HE MAKES HIS REPORTS, HE IS OBLIGED TO PROVIDE THE STATE DEPARTMENT WITH THE FACTS.

MR. STEPHANSKY. I CAN ONLY RESPOND TO THAT BY SAYING THAT THERE HAS BEEN ENOUGH PRESENTED HERE THAT WHEN THE QUESTION IS ASKED OF THE PEOPLE IN THE STATE DEPARTMENT, THAT PERHAPS YOU WILL GET A CLEARER ANSWER.

---MR. KOCH. WE ARE NOT GOING TO SUGGEST MAYBE HE IS PRESENTING THEM WITH THE FACTS AND MAYBE IT IS THAT THE FACTS ARE NOT BEING ACTED UPON HERE IN WASHINGTON. THAT IS A POSSIBILITY, CORRECT?

MR. STEPHANSKY. YES, INDEED.

---MR. FRASER. WHAT ABOUT THIS VISIT? ON THIS MISSION YOU MADE YOUR REQUEST AND YOUR RESPONSE, WAS THAT THROUGH HEADQUARTERS IN NEW YORK?

WOULD YOU IDENTIFY YOURSELF FOR THE RECORD?

MS. COHEN. ROBERTA COHEN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, INTER-NATIONAL LEAGUE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS.

WE DID NOT SEND A FORMAL LETTER OF REQUEST. WE PLANNED OUR MISSION. WE DID, BEFORE DEPARTING, AMBASSADOR STEPHANSKY DID MEET WITH THE PARAGUAYAN AMBASSADOR IN WASHINGTON BUT WE NEVER FORMALLY REQUESTED THE MISSION TO ENTER THE COUNTRY. END QUOTE.

FYI. DASHES ARE USED TO DISTINGUISH JUMPS IN TEXT OR TO SHOW WHEN ANOTHER PERSON IS SPEAKING. END FYI. KISSINGER

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